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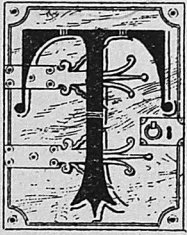
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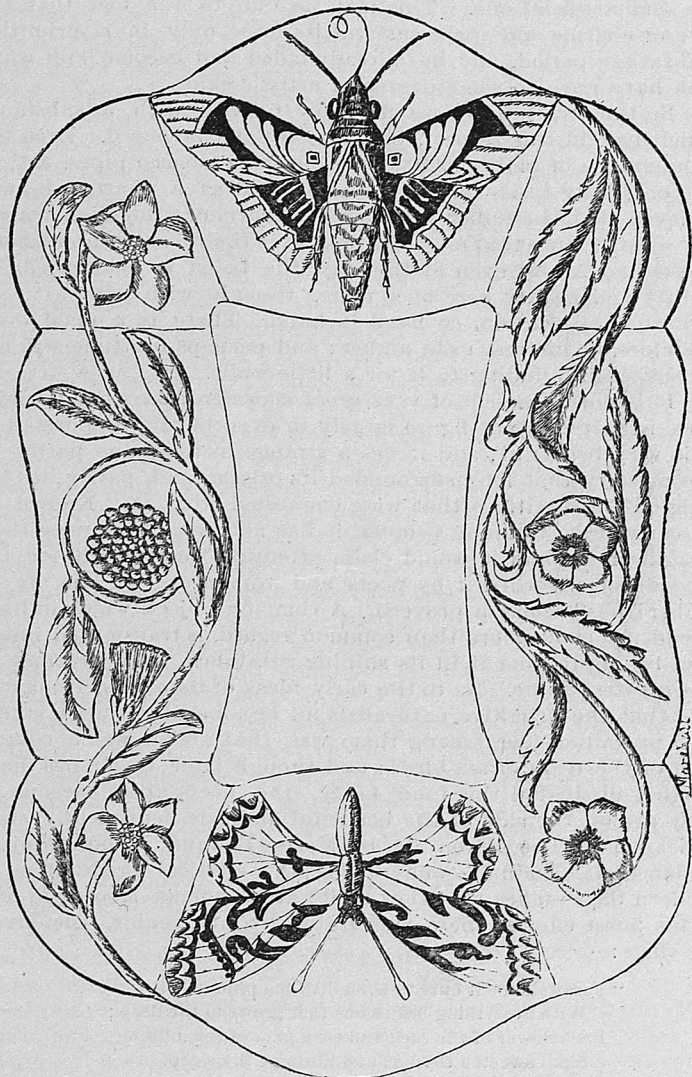
# THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

## TRIFLES FOR CHRISTMAS.

BY LAURA B. STARR.



THE burden of preparing Yuletide gifts is one which weighs right heavily upon the mind of the woman of taste and moderate means. They must each possess three qualities, a trinity which it is often very difficult to find in the one article. First of all they must be pretty—for what would a Christmas gift be without beauty? Second they must be appropriate to the age, condition, and circumstances of the recipient. Last but not least they must be inexpensive. The hundred and one trifles which fill the shop windows, glittering generalities, will not answer the purpose of my lady who wishes to put into each gift of hers loving thought and tender sentiment as well as the good will which is shown by making the offering. If she be a wood carver, or worker in brass—and most ladies do a little at both these days—she will find the manicure tray a suitable gift for one or more of her friends. The manicure sets are much more conveniently used if they are kept on a tray than if put up in one of the large cumbersome boxes, gorgeous with plush and satin: these do for traveling if one have plenty of room. but for ordinary use the tray is far more serviceable as the powder and pomade are easily removed and leave no damaging mark if the boxes chance to be overturned.



MANICURE TRAY.

The design given is a simple one and may be readily worked even by a novice in the art. The same tray will be found useful and ornamental for holding pens and pencils on a desk.

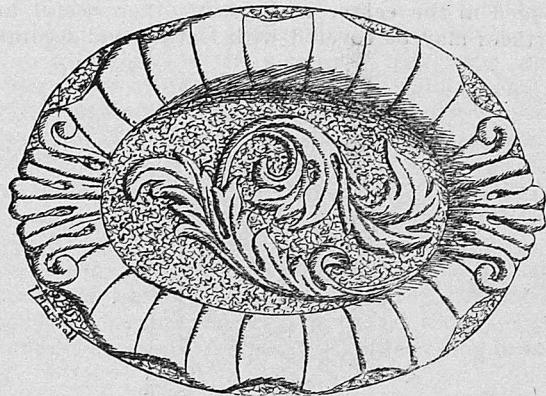
The pin-tray is to be used in the place of the tiny china bowls which for the past two or three years have held "spills" on the dressing table. Strange fashion that of making pin-cushions so handsome and elaborate that they cannot be used. This necessitated some sort of a receptacle for the holding of pins, and tiny bowls, saucers and trays into which one could put pins, glove and shoe buttons, and other oddments of every day use.

Shoe spoons are in very truth glittering generalities, suitable for any one, man, woman or child. They are easily worked and when finished handsome adjuncts to any toilet-table.

The teapot stand is rather more difficult than the articles already mentioned, but will quite repay for any extra trouble. To allow for the chamfered edge, a piece of 22-gauge metal

should be cut a quarter of an inch larger than the design. When ready for mounting, another round a quarter of an inch smaller than the first should be cut. Into this drill and countersink three holes equal distances apart, near the edge. Into these holes solder three short store screws, which are to receive three one-inch brass balls as feet. The foundation is now ready to have the design soldered upon it, which when finished will complete the stand.

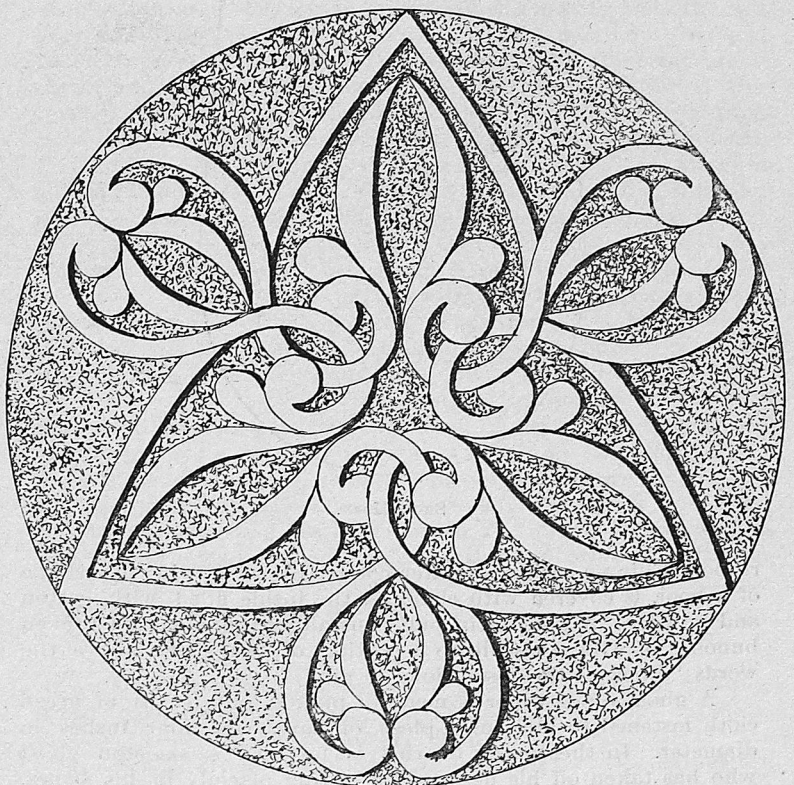
It is always a difficult thing to find suitable gifts for gentlemen as there are so few knickknacks that are of use to them. Many men there are of many minds, and some of them are as particular about the manicuring of their nails as any lady, to such an one the manicure tray would be a boon, and there is no man who would sneer at the shoe spoon, and the smoker would find the pin tray useful for holding cigar ashes. Cigar boxes done in repousse work or wood carving are also appropri-



PIN TRAY.

ate for gentlemen and inexpensive. They should be lined with tin and a piece of damp blotting paper kept inside to preserve the proper temperature. The butterfly and a portion of the design on a manicure tray could easily be transferred to the corner of a cigar box; or the butterfly might be set to one corner a little with the recipient's monogram on the opposite one, with the date wrought diagonally across the center.

Portfolios covered with Japanese matting, lined with satin and trimmed with Chinese cash—a brass coin about the size of a copper penny, with a square hole in the center—are useful gifts and not very costly. The cash is strung on ribbon that matches the satin lining—each piece being fastened down with a drop of glue—and laid along one corner, straight or diagonally as suits the fancy; monograms, quotations, salutations, and holiday greetings done in water color occupy the remainder



TEA POT STAND.

of the space. A pleasing variety may be made by using cham-ois or ooze leather for coverings. The cash may be used on these or only water color designs. A book of quotations will furnish material for the lines needed, for instance, "A letter softens the pain of absence," "A letter may alter the plans we make overnight for the slaughter of time," "Word upon word, line upon



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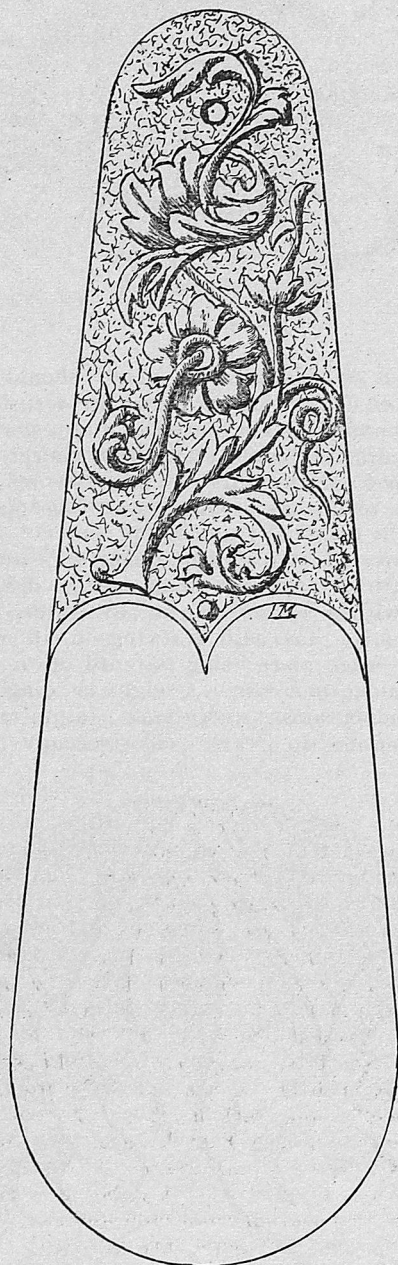
line, etc., etc." Handsome blotting pads are made and trimmed in the same way.

A book cover of chamois leather may have a row of daffodils, or a vine of trailing buds and leaves painted as a border across the top; while underneath the following stanza may be done in gilt:

"You do the poets and their song  
A grievous wrong,  
If your own soul does not bring  
To their high imagining,  
As much beauty as they sing."

The back should be laced together with thongs of leather with tasselled ends.

Bags made of chamois leather, decorated with all sorts of quaint devices, will be found useful and convenient. Card cases, postal holders, pen wipers in the shape of oak leaves with real acorns lodged in the center and many other useful and ornamental articles may be covered with leather and decorated with



SHOE HORN.

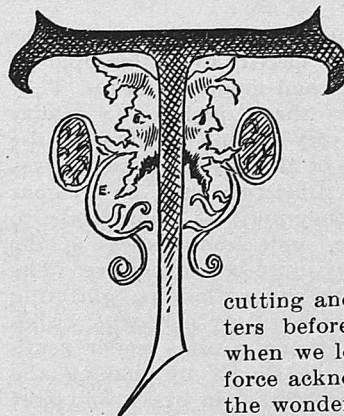
ribbon, Chinese cash and water colors. A sachet in the shape of a book is covered with chamois, the inside filled with cotton and powder. A pink satin puff runs along the edge and broken bunches of wild roses fill up a portion of the space above the words "Book of the rose" done in gilt.

A ghostly pen-wiper is made of pinked out leaves of green cloth fastened to a circular piece of cardboard four inches in diameter. In the center of this is fastened a skeleton ghost who has taken off his flesh and is sitting placidly in his bones. The little figure is made of papier mache, painted white and is, indeed, a gruesome thing to look upon. A card bearing the following stanza is fastened in front:

"Oh, when I was a little ghost,  
A merry time had we.  
Each seated on his favorite post,  
We chumped and chawed the buttered toast,  
They gave us for our tea.

### AMBER.

BY ALEXANDER H. JAPP.



THE chastest, and perhaps most permanently attractive, of gems and ornaments are those that come most direct from the lap of nature and need least from the hands of lapidary or artisan. We have seen how this effects us in the case of pearls; it is almost equally so in the cases of coral and amber. The diamond needs much cutting and polishing ere it sparkles and glitters before us like a second sunlight; and when we look on a first-rate brilliant we perforce acknowledge the fine art of man as well the wonder and the wealth of nature. The gem that has passed through many processes, and has thus lost much in size and weight, may be very valuable, but it is the emblem of artificial life and its resources, as much as of the amazing fertility of natural laws. We contemplate it with the feelings we would experience in looking on a fine picture rather than on a beautiful landscape; on a portrait rather than on the person it represents. And it is perhaps worthy of remark that the superstitions and dreams of men have been apt to choose out as subjects the purely natural gem rather than the semi-artificial one. This may be due to the fact that the love of charms and spells sustains its force only in a primitive and savage period, and has already faded and become faint when men have risen to some degree of artistic skill.

Be this as it may, we are now to deal with a substance which has, in this respect, been particularly favoured. Even the common use of amber as a mouth piece to tobacco pipes, &c., is due originally to its having been accepted as a charm; it was believed that the amber would act as a charm or protection against any evil influence that might be present in the tobacco; and among Turks and Arabs, even at this day, the belief is acknowledged. Utility and beauty here once more, though with somewhat of grotesque association, go hand in hand. There is a good deal, therefore, to interest us in amber; and perhaps our time will not be wasted in alluding to it for a little while.

It is not an article of very great consideration, commercially speaking—it does not figure largely in exports and imports—but it is very beautiful, and it has a strange history, due partly to the mystery that long surrounded its origin, and partly to the religious superstitions that were connected with it. Known at an early stage to many peoples it has not failed to impress their imaginations; and it would claim attention were it only for the recognition accorded it by poets and romancers. "The fly in amber" has become a proverb. A common object, which in itself would not claim more than common regard, is transmuted into a gem by imprisonment in its shining substance, and becomes of the greatest value. As to the early ideas of its origin, it may be said that the primitive naturalists all became poets in its study. The prevailing idea among them was, that amber was a concretion of the tears of sea-birds; and though later researches have harshly dissipated this fond fancy, the poets, pertinacious as they are on the side of the beautiful and fine sentiment, refuse to let it go. The Baron de la Motte Fouqué in his exquisite romance of "Undine"—one of the the classical productions of modern days—takes this view of it; and Thomas Moore, in one of his finest efforts, anew consecrates, by his genius, the error. He sings:—

"Farewell! be it ours to embellish the pillow  
With everything beauteous that grows in the deep;  
Each flower of the rock and each gem of the billow  
Shall sweeten thy bed and illumine thy sleep.

*Around thee shall glitter the loveliest amber  
That ever the sorrowing sea-bird wept;  
With many a shell in whose hollow-wreathed chamber  
The Peris of ocean by moonlight have slept."*

The Greeks, with their usual tendency to set every belief into anthropomorphic or parabolic form, have thus delicately rung the changes on the tear-idea. The daughters of the sun, they said, were changed into poplars on the banks of the Eridanus, and their tears shed for the death of their brother Phæthon were converted into amber. The first mention of amber is found in Homer's "Odyssey" (xv. 480). There the poet makes Eumæus say, in the course of his recital of his story—

"An artist to my father's palace came  
With gold and amber chains, elaborate frame.  
Each female eye the glittering links employ;  
They turn, review, and cheapen every toy."

This is Pope's translation—hardly so strong and grand as the original, of course, but the lines give the general idea, and show